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ABSTRACT

The programmed course outline for an American government course is designed to help students understand the electoral college. The outline contains questions and answers for the students taking the programmed course. Students are directed to reply to each of the 37 questions before looking at the answer printed immediately below the question. If unable to correctly respond to the question, the students are directed to look at the answer and reread the question until they understand the material. Hints are provided for particularly difficult questions. A summary is presented after the first 11 questions and a self-test is included as question 37. Students are directed to continue going through the preceding program of 36 questions until they can correctly answer the ten questions in the self-test. Test questions are (1) who elects the president of the United States? (2) how many electors are there? (3) what three components equal the total number of electoral votes? (4) how are a state's electoral votes determined? (5) who has the constitutional authority to select the electors in each state? (6) who nominates the slate of electors in each state that represents the candidate on the general election ballot? (7) when does the electoral college meet? (8) how many electoral votes are required to become president? (9) what happens if no candidate receives a majority? (10) which slate of electors casts its ballots? (Author/DB)

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# THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE: A PROGRAMMED COURSE

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# THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE: A PROGRAMMED COURSE

Directions. Read one frame at a time keeping the answer portion, below the dotted line, covered with your answer shield. Attempt to answer each question before you look at the answer. If you are unable to answer the question, go back and read the frame again until you understand the material.

---

1. Look at the election returns below for the presidential election of 1824. Who do you suppose won the election?

| Candidate | Popular Vote | % |
|---|---|---|
| John Quincy Adams | 115,696 | 31.9% |
| Andrew Jackson | 152,933 | 42.2% |
| Wm. H. Crawford | 46,979 | 13.0% |
| Henry Clay | 47,136 | 13.0% |

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Answer: If you said Andrew Jackson won the election, you are wrong! Although Jackson won the most popular votes nationally, the president of the United States is not elected by popular votes.

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2. American citizens do not vote directly for the president of the United States. Instead, the United States Constitution provides for the election of the president through an electoral college.

   The president of the U. S. is elected by an e_____ college.

---

Answer: The president is elected by an electoral college.

---

3. The electoral college consists of 538 electoral votes, or electors.

   Who elects the president of the United States?

---

Answer: The electoral college.

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4. The founding fathers who wrote our constitution made no provisions for the American people to vote for the president. They believed the electors would deliberate among themselves and cast their vote for the candidate who would make the best president.

   The president is elected by an electoral college consisting of _38 electoral votes.

---

Answer: 538 electoral votes

---

5. The figure 538 is equal to the total membership of the United States Congress (535) plus 3 electoral votes for the citizens of Washington, D. C.

   The president is elected by an _____ _____ consisting of _ _ _ electors.

---

Answer: The president is elected by an electoral college consisting of 538 electors.

---

6. The United States Congress consists of 535 members. There are 100 Senators in the U. S. Senate and 435 Representatives (Congressmen) in the U. S. House of Representatives=535.

   The electoral college has 538 members and Congress has only 535. What is the source of the additional 3 electoral votes?

   Drop down one line for a hint!

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Hint: What is the capital of the United States?

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Answer: The additional 3 electoral votes are for the citizens of Washington, D. C.

---

7. In the electoral college, each state is represented by electors equal in number to its representation in Congress. For example, Maryland with 2 Senators and 8 Representatives has 10 electors.

   If South Carolina has 8 members in Congress, how many electoral votes does South Carolina have in the electoral college?

---

Answer: South Carolina has 8 electors in the electoral college. It has the same number of electors as it has members in Congress.

---

8. Every state has 2 Senators in the U. S. Senate.

   If every state is entitled to 2 Senators, how many Senators does each of the following states have in the Senate?

   Texas__?
   California__?
   Rhode Island__?

---

Answer: 2 each. All states, regardless of size, have two Senators in the U. S. Congress.

---

9. The number of Representatives in the United States House of Representatives from each state is determined by the population of that state. The number ranges from 1 Representative for the least populous states such as Alaska and Delaware to 45 for the most populous state--California.

   If Texas has 24 Representatives in the House of Representatives, how many electoral votes does Texas have in the electoral college?

   Drop down one line for a hint!

---

Hint: Add the number of Senators and Representatives from Texas.

---

Answer: Texas has 26 electors in the electoral college, the same number of members it has in Congress. You were told Texas has 24 Representatives and all states have 2 Senators. 24 + 2 = 26.

---

10. Although every state has the same number of electoral votes as it has members in Congress, the Senators and Representatives themselves do not serve as the electors in the electoral college. Adding the number of Senators and Representatives is simply the method used to determine the number of electoral votes to which each state is entitled.

    Congress consists of 35 members. There are 35 in the House of Representatives and 100 in the Senate= 35. The electoral college consists of _ _ _ members.

---

Answer: Congress consists of 535 members. 435 in the House of Representatives and 100 in the Senate. The electoral college consists of 538 members.

---

11. Summary: The president is elected by an _____ _____ consisting of _ _ _ members. Every state has the same number of electors as it does members in C_ _ _ _ _ _ _. To determine the number of electoral votes from each state, add the number of S_ _ _ _ _ _ _ and R_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ from that state.

---

Answer: The president is elected by an electoral college consisting of 538 members. Every state has the same number of electors as it does members in Congress. To determine the number of electoral votes from each state, add the number of Senators and Representatives from that state.

---

12. How are the electors in the electoral college selected? The U. S. Constitution grants the state legislature of each state the constitutional authority to select that state's electors in any manner it chooses.

    Who has the legal, constitutional, authority to select the electors from each state?
    a) the American voters
    b) the U. S. Congress
    c) the state legislature

---

Answer: c) the state legislature.

---

13. The state legislatures have the constitutional authority to select the electors from their state, but since the 1830's all of the states have attempted to make the process more democratic by giving the voters an indirect role in voting for the president.

    Congress consists of _ _ _ members; _ _ _ in the House and _ _ _ in the Senate.

---

Answer: Congress consists of 535 members; 435 in the House and 100 in the Senate.

---

14. In addition to giving the voters an indirect vote for the president, the states have also given the political parties in their state a role in the process by allowing them to nominate the electors for their party.

    Who has the constitutional authority to select electors from each state?

---

Answer: the state legislature.

---

15. The state legislature has the constitutional authority to select electors, but they have chosen to delegate this reponsibility to the v_ _ _ _ _ and p_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ p_ _ _ _ _ _ of their state.

---

Answer: voters and political parties.

---

16. In each state, the political parties nominate a slate of electors to represent their party's presidential nominee on the general election ballot. The slate of electors is equal to the number of electoral votes to which that state is entitled. In other words, in Texas the Democratic Party nominates a slate of 26 electors to represent the Democratic presidential nominee and the Republican Party nominates a slate of 26 electors to represent its presidential nominee. This is usuall done at the party's state convention.

    If Louisiana has 10 electoral votes, how many electors will the Democratic Party of Louisiana nominate to represent the Democratic presidential nominee? How many will the Republicans nominate?

---

Answer: each party will nominate 10 electors to represent that party's presidential nominee because Louisiana has 10 electoral votes. Any third parties will also nominate a slate of 10 electors.

---

17. In the general election, the names of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates may appear on the ballot, but when the voter votes for one of these two candidates, they are not voting directly for the candidate himself. Actually, we are voting for the slate of electors nominated by that candidate's party and who are pledged to support that candidate. Most voters think they are voting directly for the presidential candidate; but, in reality, they are voting directly for his electors.

The slate of electors representing the candidates on the general election ballot are nominated by the p_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ p_ _ _ _ _ _ in that state.

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Answer. Political Parties.

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18. For example, if you voted for Richard Nixon in the 1972 general election for president, you were not actually voting for Richard Nixon. You were voting for the 26 electors nominated by the Republican Party in Texas who were pledged to Nixon. Thus, you were voting indirectly for Nixon by voting directly for his electors. If you voted for George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election, you were actually voting for the 26 electors pledged to McGovern who were nominated by the Democractic Party of Texas during their state convention.

American voters have a _____(direct/indirect) vote for president.

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Answer. Indirect.

---

19. Since Texas has only 26 electoral votes, how is it decided whether the 26 Democratic electors or 26 Republican electors will cast its ballots in the electoral college? This is where the voters (popular votes) become important. The candidate which receives a plurality of popular votes in the general election will have his electors become part of the electoral college that actually elects the president.

1) Who has the constitutional authority to select electors?
2) Who selects the slate of electors that represents the candidate on the general election ballot?
3) Who decides which slate of electors will cast its ballots in the electoral college?

---

Answer: 1) The state legislature.
2) The political parties.
3) The voters (popular votes).

---

20. Thus, if the Democratic candidate receives a plurality of popular votes in Texas, then the 26 electors nominated by the Democratic Party and pledged to the Democratic candidate will become part of the electoral college and cast its electoral votes for president. The 26 electors nominated by the Republican Party who were pledged to the Republican candidate were not selected to the electoral college and thus have no function.

If you vote for the Republican candiate for president, you are not actually voting for the candidate himself. Rather, you are voting for the s_ _ _ _ of e_ _ _ _ _ _ _ pledged to that candidate.

---

Answer: Slate of electors.

---

21. If the Democratic candidate wins a plurality of popular votes in Texas and the 26 Democratic electors gets to cast its ballots in the electoral college, the 26 electors will then represent Texas in the electoral college. Although they may cast their electoral votes for any person they choose, they normally vote for the person which they pledged to support. This also means, of course, that they are voting for the candidate which won the popular votes in Texas. Thus, popular votes determine which slate of electors will become part of the electoral college and cast its ballots for president.

If the Republican presidential candidate receives 60% of the popular votes in Texas and the Democratic candidate receives 40%, how many of Texas' 26 electoral votes will each candidate receive in the electoral college?
Democrat will receive _____% or _____(how many) electoral votes?
Republican will receive _____% or _____(how many) electoral votes?

---

Answer: Democrat will receive 0% or 0 electoral votes.
Republican will receive 100% or 26 electoral votes.
This is winner-take-all system because the candidate receiving a plurality of popular votes receives all of that state's electoral votes.

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22. In 16 states and the District of Columbia, the electors must vote for the presidential candidate whose electors won in those states (in other words, the electors must vote for the candidate receiving a plurality of popular votes in their state). However, in the remaining 34 states (including Texas), the electors may vote for any person--even if that person was not a candidate for president. By custom, they usually vote for the candidate they represented on the ballot. But there have been several instances of electors who did not. For example, in the presidential election of 1968, Dr. Lloyd W. Bailey, an elector from North Carolina who had been nominated as a Republican elector, chose to vote for Wallace although Nixon won the popular vote in North Carolina.

If Richard Nixon received 80 million popular votes in 1972 and George McGovern received no votes, would it be possible for McGovern to still have won the presidency? Explain.

---

Answer: Yes! Because the electors can vote for any candidate they choose regardless of who wins the popular votes (at least this is true in 34/50 states).

---

23. If the president is elected by the electoral college and not popular votes, then why do the citizens of each state bother to vote?

The popular votes in each state determine which presidential c_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ will receive that state's e _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ votes.

---

24. Summary: The president of the U. S. is elected by an _____ _____ which consists of ___ (how many) members. Each state has the same number of electoral votes as it has members in _____. To determine how many electoral votes in each state, add the number of _____ and _____ from that state. The _____ _____ in each state has the constitutional authority to select the electors from each state. However, in practice, that responsibility has been delegated to the _____ and _____ _____ of each state. Each _____ _____ nominates a slate of electors that represents the presidential candidate on the general election ballot. The candidate that receives a plurality of popular votes in that state wins _____% of that state's electoral votes.

---

Answer: electoral college; 538; Congress; Senators and Representatives (or vice-versa); state legislature; voters and political parties; political party; 100%.

If you missed several of these questions, you need to go back through frames 1-24 again.

---

25. A candidate must win a majority of electoral votes to become president.

How many electoral votes must a candidate receive to become president? Give the exact number.

Drop down one line for a hint!

---

Hint: A majority is 50% + one of any number. How many votes are there in the electoral college? Simply divide!

---

Answer: The answer is 270. There are 538 electoral votes. 50% of 538 is 269 + 1 = 270. A candidate must win a majority of electoral votes to become president; a majority of 538 = 270.

---

26. To determine the winner in an actual election, you would first have to look at each individual state to determine which candidate won the popular vote in each state. The winning candidate in each state wins all of that state's electoral votes. You would then add up the number of electoral votes won by each candidate in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and the candidate receiving 270 or more electoral votes would become president.

True or False: to become president a candidate must receive a majority or least a plurality of all the popular votes in the nation.

---

Answer: False. To become president, a candidate must receive a majority of electoral, not popular, votes in the nation-wide totals. Popular votes have no function in the nation-wide totals. The candidate who wins a majority of electoral votes does not necessarily win the most popular votes nationally.

---

27. Since electoral votes are used to determine who wins the presidential election, popular votes are only important in determining which candidate will receive the electoral votes in each state. Thus, electoral votes are important in the nation-wide totals whereas the popular votes are only important at the state-wide level.

    The candidate who receives a majority of electoral votes will always win the most popular votes nationally. True or False?

---

Answer: False. Three times in U. S. history, the candidate with the most popular votes did not receive a majority of elecotral votes and thus did not become president. In 1825 Adams was elected over Jackson, in 1876 Hayes was elected over Tilden, and in 1888 Harrison was elected over Cleveland. In all three cases, the losing candidate had the most popular votes.

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28. Thus, the nation-wide popular vote totals serve no useful purpose in determining the presidency since the electoral college vote is the one which elects the president.

    If the national popular vote totals serve no function, why do the people vote in presidential elections?

---

Answer: The popular vote determines which candidate receives a state's electoral votes.

---

29. Assume a presidential election has 3 major candidates (as in 1968). If candidate A received 150 electoral votes, candidate B received 200 electoral votes, and candidate C received 188 electoral votes. Which candidate would become president?

Drop down one line for a hint!

---

Hint: How many electoral votes are required to become president?_70.

---

Answer: None of the three candidates won. 270 electoral votes, a majority of 538, are required to become president. None of the three candidates received a majority. What happens now??

---

30. If no candidate receives a majority of electoral votes, then the presidential election goes to the House of Representatives where the 435 Representatives decides between the top three candidates.

A _____(majority/plurality) of popular votes is required to win a state's electoral votes.

---

Answer: Plurality. A plurality of popular votes is required to win a state's electoral votes, but a majority of electoral votes is required to win the presidency.

---

31. If the presidential election goes to the House of Representatives, each state has only one vote regardless of how many electoral votes that state has. The least populous state, Alaska, has the same number of votes as the most populous state, California, when the House of Representatives is given the task of electing the president. When the decision goes to the House, a majority vote is needed for election.

How many votes are required to become president if the decision goes to the House?

Drop down one line for a hint!

---

Hint: If each state has one vote and a majority is needed, how many states are there? (do not include Washington, D. C.).

---

Answer: 26 votes are required if the decision goes to the House of Representatives. There are 50 states, each state gets one vote, and a majority of 50=26.

---

32. The general election for president is held in November of even-numbered every four years (1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, etc.).

If no candidate receives a majority of electoral college votes, the president is elected by the _____ of_____.

---

Answer: House of Representatives.

---

33. Although the general election in which the public votes for the president (actually only an indirect vote for the president since the public votes for the electors) is held in November, the actual presidential election is not held until mid-December when the electoral college meets.

The general election for president is held in the month of N_____ of _____(even/odd)-numbered years every four years.

---

Answer: November of even-numbered years every four-years.

---

34. Thus, although we think we know who wins the presidency the day after the general election, the presidency is not actually decided until about 40 days later when the electoral college elects the president.

Although the president is not actually decided until mid-December, how do we know the day after the general election who the electors will vote for in December? Because the electors normally vote for the candidate that they represented on the ballot; in other words, they vote for the candidate who received a _____ (plurality/majority) of _____(electoral/popular) votes in their state.

---

Answer: Electors normally vote for the candidate that they represented on the ballot; in other words, they vote for the candidate who received a plurality of popular votes in their state. We have seen however, that the electors may vote for anybody they want to.

---

35. Now that you know how the electoral college works, let's work a couple of hypothetical problems to make sure you understand!

Work the following problem. We will use just two states as examples to make the problem easier.

| | New Hampshire<br>4 electoral votes | Delaware<br>3 electoral votes |
|---|---|---|
| | Popular votes | Popular votes |
| Candidate A | 10 | 6 |
| Candidate B | 8 | 7 |



continued--

35.--continued.

1) Give the total popular votes for candidates A and B.
2) Give the total electoral votes for candidates A and B.
3) Which candidate, if any, won the presidency?

If you cannot answer the question, drop down one line for a hint!

---

Hint: 1) First, add up all the popular votes candidate A received from New Hampshire and Delaware: 10 + 6= ?
Now, add up all the popular votes candidate B received from New Hampshire and Delaware: 8 + 7= ?
2) Which candidate won New Hampshire's electoral votes? (who won a plurality of popular votes in New Hampshire?).
Which candidate won the electoral votes in Delaware? (who won a plurality of popular votes in Delaware?).
Now, add up all the electoral votes won by each candidate.
3) Did either candidate win a majority of electoral votes? How many electoral votes are there? 4 + 3 = ?
What constitutes a majority?

---

Answer: 1) Candidate A received 16 popular votes (10 + 6= 16).
Candidate B received 15 popular votes (8 + 7= 15).
2) Candidate A received 4 electoral votes (he wins all of New Hampshire's electoral votes because he won a plurality of popular votes in N.H. He did not win a plurality in Delaware, therefore, he wins none of Delaware's electoral votes.).
Candidate B received 3 electoral votes (he does not receive any of the electoral votes from N.H. since he did not win the popular votes in that state, but he won the popular votes in Delaware, so he wins all 3 of Delaware's electoral votes).
3) There are 7 electoral votes (4 in N. H. and 3 in Delaware); and, a majority is needed become president=4. Candidate A received 4 electoral votes, a majority, and thus becomes president.

---

36. Now, work the following problem on your own!

| | Arizona 6 electoral votes | Texas 26 electoral votes | Louisiana 10 electoral votes |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Popular votes | Popular votes | Popular votes |
| Candidate A | 2 | 10 | 3 |
| Candidate B | 8 | 9 | 7 |

1) How many total popular votes did Candidate A receive?
   How many total popular votes did Candidate B receive?

2) How many total electoral votes did Candidate A receive?
   How many total electoral votes did Candidate B receive?

3) Who was elected president? Did the candidate who won the presidency also win the most popular votes?

---

Answer: 1) Candidate A won 15 popular votes. (2 + 10 + 3=15)
Candidate B won 24 popular votes. (8 + 9 + 7=24)

2) Candidate A won 26 electoral votes. (Texas=26)
Candidate B won 16 electoral votes. (Arizona + La.=16)

3) Candidate A won the presidency. (42 electoral votes, 22 needed for a majority)

Although Candidate A became president by receiving a majority of electoral votes, he received only 15 popular votes while Candidate B received 24 popular votes. Thus, the candidate won became president did not win the most popular votes.

38. Self-Test. If you are unable to answer all of the following questions, you should go through the program again until you get them 100% correct.

(1) Who elects the president of the U. S.?

(2) How many electors are in the electoral college?

(3) What 3 components are added together to equal the total number of electoral votes in the electoral college?

(4) To determine how many electoral votes a state has in the electoral college, add the number of_____ and _____from that state.

(5) Who has the constitutional authority to select the electors in each state?

(6) Who nominates the slate of electors in each state that represents the candidate on the general election ballot?

(7) How is it decided which slate of electors gets to cast its ballots in the electoral college?

(8) How many electoral votes are required to become president?

(9) What happens if no candidate receives a majority of electoral votes?

(10) When does the electoral college meet to elect the president and when is the general election held?

---

Answer: (1) Electoral college.
(2) 538.
(3) The House of Representatives, Senate, and electoral votes of Washington, D. C.
(4) Senators and Representatives.
(5) State legislature.
(6) The political parties.
(7) The candidate which receives a plurality of popular votes receives all of that state's electoral votes.
(8) 270.
(9) The House of Representatives elects the president.
(10) The electoral college meets in mid-December and the general election is in November of even-numbered years every four years.